

Testimony of Sandra Gallagher, Home Visitor, Family School Connection Program
Madonna Place, Inc.
240 Main Street
Norwich, CT 06360

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Public Hearing: 02/16/2016
Public Hearing on the Governor's Proposed Budget

Good afternoon Senator Bye, Representative Walker and Committee Members;

Please do not support Governor Malloy's plan to cut Family School Connection Programs. My name is Sandra A. Gallagher. I am a bilingual home visitor for the Family School Connection Program in Norwich. Family School Connection is a prevention program funded by the Office of Early Childhood - Children's Trust Fund – Family Support Division. Our program provides comprehensive home visiting and support services for families whose children are frequently absent, truant, have academic or behavior problems, or often come to school unprepared. In addition, the program provides services to parents who are not adequately engaged with the school or attending to their child's educational needs. Children who are not getting their needs met are at greater risk for developmental, behavioral and health issues – issues that too often lead to school failure.

As a home visitor, my primary role is to support parents in learning to cope with every day stressors which can impede their ability to effectively support their children in their education. We use evidence based curricula and strength based techniques to support parents in becoming powerful advocates for themselves and their children and to strengthen their connection with school personnel. The majority of families that I have worked with have reported an increased confidence level in communicating with their children's school in a positive and effective manner. This improvement in communication between families and the schools that support them is directly linked to reducing the educational achievement gap.

I am requesting that the Family School Connection program and all the programs funded by the Office of Early Childhood - Children's Trust Fund – Family Support Division not to be cut. Cutting funding would leave families without the necessary supports to build on their natural strengths, improve parenting skills, and decrease dependency on long-term state assistance. I have personally witnessed the effectiveness of this program such as, improved attendance, more Parent Involvement in their child's education, and families empowering themselves in their home and communities. One parent has expressed to me without this program "I would not have been able to know how to communicate with my child's school, due to my non English speaking skills and I am thankful the home visitor to help me connect with English Language classes to better my English and help me be a strong advocate at my child's school."

Please consider all I have said and do not eliminate the Family School Connection program, a prevention program funded by the Office of Early Childhood - Children's Trust Fund – Family Support Division

Respectfully,
Sandra Gallagher